

Few Days In
AL-ANDALUS
Muslim Spain

الأندلس

Shaykh Al-Islam Justice
MUFTĪ MUḤAMMAD TAQĪ USMĀNĪ

Translated By
MUNĪR ĀDAM

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In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

Salutations, peace and blessings be upon His Messenger

Our Master Muḥammad, Mercy to the Worlds.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

In our hands is a truly exciting and captivating travelogue of Spain, known under centuries of Muslim rule as *Al-Andalus*.

Penned by none other than the revered and prolific scholar of our time, Muftī Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī (May Allah *Ta'āla* protect him), it draws our attention to subtle glimpses and remnants from this once classical Muslim land.

Though intriguing and fascinating, it surely is heart-wrenching and will leave us with the cry of 'if only' Muslims had held on...

This book brings to light an apt-description of the Muslims' fall from grace, a gradual and painful decline; the inevitable consequence of negligence concerning the injunctions of Allah; when over immersion in the glitter, glamour, and gloss of this world fuels the downfall of Muslims.

Munīr Ādam

Harare, Zimbabwe

14 Jumādā Al-Ūlā 1440 AH – 10 January 2019

GLOSSARY

<i>Al-Andalus</i>	Muslim Spain
<i>Malaqa</i>	Malaga
<i>Qurṭubah</i>	Cordoba
<i>Gharnāṭa</i>	Granada
<i>Al-Ḥamrā'</i>	Alhambra
<i>Al-Madrasa</i>	La Madraza
<i>Bāb Ar-Ramla</i>	Bib-Rambla
<i>Ḥayy Al-Bayāzīn</i>	Albayzin/Albaicin
<i>Jannah Al-'Arīf</i>	Generalife
<i>Ishbiliyyah</i>	Seville
<i>Wādī Al-Kabīr</i>	Guadalquivir/Guadalquivir River
<i>Madīnah Az-Zahrā'</i>	The Sunshine City
<i>Lawsha/Loxa</i>	Loja
<i>Qushtala</i>	Castille
<i>Al-Beera</i>	Elvira
<i>Shaneel</i>	Genil (River)

Anteqira

Antequera

Khalīfah

Caliph

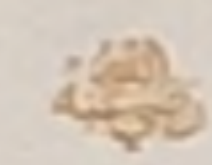
TRANSLITERATION KEY

ا	' , a, ā	ض	ḍ
ب	b	ط	ṭ
ت	t	ظ	ẓ
ث	th	ع	' , 'ā, 'ī, 'ū
ج	j	غ	gh
ح	ḥ	ف	f
خ	kh	ق	q
د	d	ك	k
ذ	dh	ل	l
ر	r	م	m
ز	z	ن	n
س	s	و	w, ū, u
ش	sh	ه	h
ص	ṣ	ي	y, ī, i

HONORIFICS



Used following the mention of Prophet Muḥammad.
(May the salutations and peace of Allah be upon him)



Used after the mention of a noble Ṣaḥābī (Companion) of the Prophet ﷺ.
(May Allah be pleased with him)



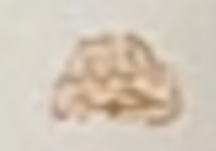
Used after mention of two Companions.
(May Allah be pleased with them both)



Used after mention of three or more Companions.
(May Allah be pleased with them all)



Used after mention of an angel or a prophet.
(May peace be upon him)



Used after mention of a scholar, saint, or pious person who has passed away.
(May Allah shower His Mercies upon him)



Used after mention of two deceased pious persons.
(May Allah shower His Mercies upon them both)



Used after mention of three or more deceased pious persons.
(May Allah shower His Mercies upon them all)



IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,
THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL

The 'Islamic Fiqh Academy' and the 'Islamic Bank of Jeddah' jointly held a business conference in the capital city of Morocco, Rabat. The topic of discussion was the status of contemporary business transactions. I too was invited.

I therefore boarded a PIA (Pakistan International Airlines) flight on the morning of the 19th Rabī' Al-Thānī 1410 AH (18 November 1989). Because there was no direct flight from Pakistan to Morocco, I had to go via Paris. On the way to Paris, the plane briefly stopped over in Cairo. After an eleven-hour flight, I reached the 'Orly' airport in Paris. After making the necessary flight arrangements in the Paris airport for close to four hours, I finally boarded another Air-France flight at 7.30pm for Morocco. The flight took three hours and I finally landed at 9.30pm Morocco time.

I was accommodated in the 'Hyatt Regency' hotel. The conference was hosted in a hall of this very hotel. I was occupied for nearly five days in broad discussions. Between the various programmes, I was fortunate to visit a couple of areas in Rabat. But due to tiring discussions and continuous rain, most of my time was spent in the hotel.

Morocco is very close to Spain. Considering the splendid 800-year Muslim rule in Spain, it was a heartfelt desire of mine to visit Spain from my early days. Considering the proximity of Morocco, I thought it would be appropriate to visit Spain now. But due to commitments, it would not be possible to spend much time there. Furthermore, for this journey I would require a companion. It was Allah's plan that the programme ended two days prior to its scheduled ending and I could not get a flight to Karachi in these two days. On the other hand, my friend, Sa'id Ahmed, who is the director general of the 'Faisal Islamic Bank' of Bahrain, was not only prepared to accompany me, he was also willing to fulfil all the necessary arrangements for the journey. He promptly went about making all the necessary arrangements so diligently that I did not have to do anything.

We initially felt that we should travel by rail to Tangier and then cross the Mediterranean Sea by ship. This would see us reaching the coast of the Green Island of Spain, but we were short of time. This route would have taken us a day. We therefore decided to take the flight to the Spanish port city of Malaga. The conference ended on the evening of the 23rd of *Rabī' Al-Thānī* 1410 AH and on the 24th of *Rabī' Al-Thānī*, we set off by car for Casablanca at 7 am. This was a two-hour long journey. Throughout the length of this journey, we were flanked on the right by the Mediterranean Sea and on the left by lush greenery as far as the eye could see. We also came across several small villages along the journey. At approximately 9 am we arrived at the Mohammed V International Airport of Casablanca.

At 11.30 am we boarded the Iberian Airlines flight destined for Malaga. Within fifty minutes we had crossed over the Mediterranean Sea. A short while later we could see the coast of Malaga and its vast and expansive buildings. The plane landed in Malaga's huge airport at 1.30 pm local time.

I will - Allah willing - discuss Malaga at the end of this travelogue. For now, I will suffice to mention that this port and its coastline were important features in Muslim Spain. Several major historical events occurred here.

By the time we completed all relevant immigration procedures, it was 2.30 pm. Granada (*Gharnāṭa*) was a further two and a half to three-hour road journey from here. We therefore performed our *Ẓuhr Ṣalāh* in the Malaga airport.

This was that very land where for 800 years the *Adhān* would be called out in every 'nook and corner'. Probably, no portion of this ground was left without being prostrated upon. But today, there was none to even provide accurate directions of the *Qiblah*. I therefore used my compass to determine the correct direction of the *Qiblah*. We performed our *Ṣalāh* in congregation in a corner of the airport. In this city where at one stage in history, every child was born testifying to the *Kalimah* and in an environment conducive to *Ṣalāh*, yet today sadly, the Spanish were so unfamiliar and surprised by our actions that they seemed shell shocked. I have performed *Ṣalāh* in several airports of the world, including many public places in the USA, but I have never seen people express more unfamiliarity with the postures of *Ṣalāh* than here in Spain.

Nonetheless! Taking a great lesson and with a grieving heart, I performed my first *Ṣalāh* in this land of Spain. As in other western countries, one is able to hire a car here without the need for a driver. We hired a 'Feta' car for two days. I thought to myself that the roads here are alien to us and we cannot even speak Spanish, we would therefore encounter many difficulties if we were to journey alone. But my friend and

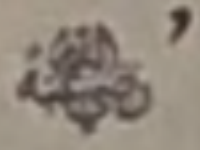
companion, Muhammad Sa'id was courageous and took responsibility to drive. He even managed to organise a roadmap leading to Granada. With this map in hand, we commenced our journey.

We encountered a fair bit of difficulty in reaching the highway to Granada. Then eventually, within the inner city of Malaga, we saw direction signs indicating to Granada. These signs were displayed at short intervals and so many times that we did not require to ask anyone. Using these directions, we came out of Malaga's densely populated city. We were now on the highway and with it gradually, the city's buildings were behind us. We were then flanked by a series of small green and lush mountains. On the foot of these mountains were beautiful olive plantations as far as the eye could see. Having read of the natural beauty that Spain possessed, today the reality on the ground certainly bore testimony to that.

This was that very land of Spain with which we possessed heartfelt attachment from young on account of Muslims ruling over it for 800 years. It is simply not possible to enumerate the number of impressions and visions that the imagination had created of this land. The beautiful valleys we saw certainly conformed to all the impressions we had. It seemed like an 800-year-old film playing. A people who elevated the chants of the 'Takbīr' (*Allāhu-Akbar*) in this land under the protection of their swords and who displayed the splendour and awe of their might for 800 years then tragically became trapped, engulfed and intoxicated in music and merrymaking to such an extent that today, barely any sign remains of their glorious past.

Spain, which is also referred to as 'Hispania' is located in Western Europe. Bordering it to the south is France and to the west is Portugal. On its eastern and northern side is the Mediterranean Ocean.

There is a narrow strait that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. This strait is called the 'Strait of Gibraltar'. On the other end of this strait begins Africa. The nearest country to it is Morocco.

I have previously discussed Algeria in my travelogue and the circumstances surrounding 'Uqba ibn Nāfi'  conquering Morocco.

Until the end of the 1st Islamic century, Muslims were occupied in conquering North Africa, eventually reaching the Atlantic Ocean. It was the distinct speciality of the Islamic powers of the initial eras, that rather than their driving factor being the thirst for conquering lands or increasing their territories, their true ambition and mission was to remove man from the slavery of the creation towards the slavery of Allah.

In whichever lands they raised their flags in victory, you will find that justice, peace and tranquillity filled the air. The result was that instead of the people of the conquered lands despising them, they began loving them. And the oppressed people of lands that had not yet been conquered (by Muslims) wished that the Muslims too would conquer their lands and establish their authority.

At the time, Spain was ruled by the Christian King, Roderick. The Moroccan Coast was under a 'Bar-bari' chief by the name Joleen. He too was a Christian. Roderick had appointed him as his tax-collector. Roderick was known to be an oppressive ruler. Included in the list of his wicked acts was in promising his subjects royal treatment for their young children, he would virtually enslave these innocent souls. He would even abuse and fulfil his desires with them. In the guise of the same promise, the same form of treatment was meted out to the daughter of Joleen. The girl informed her father of what transpired, resulting in hatred for Roderick and his rule.

This was a time when Muslims, under the leadership of Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr had conquered the major portion of North Africa. Joleen took along a delegation and went to Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr. He requested Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr to conquer Spain and remove the people from the tyranny and oppressive rule of Roderick. Upon this request of Joleen, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr took the matter to the Caliph of the time, Walīd ibn ‘Abd Al-Malik seeking permission to attack. The Caliph permitted him but advised caution. Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr initially sent a couple of delegations to Spain from Tangier to ascertain the true position on the ground. They embraced the task and were successful in their quest. Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr then appointed Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād as leader over a large army to attack Spain.

The army of Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād comprised of 7,000 soldiers. In order to transport the entire army to Spain, they used four large vessels, which for days continued moving back and forth until eventually the entire army reached the coast of Spain, known as the ‘Strait of Gibraltar’ (Jabal At-Ṭāriq) even today.

It is also related that a few minutes after ascending the vessel, sleep overcame Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād. He happened to see Nabī ﷺ in his dream. Nabī ﷺ, his Al-Khulafā’ Ar-Rāshidīn (the rightly guided Caliphs) and other Ṣaḥābah (companions) ﷺ were advancing in the ocean waters armed with swords and arrows. When Nabī ﷺ passed by Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād, he announced, ‘Ṭāriq! Advance! Advance!’ Ṭāriq then saw Nabī ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah (companions) taking the lead (ahead of them) and entering Spain.

When Ṭāriq’s eyes opened he was over-joyous. He had been granted glad tidings of the conquest of Spain. He related the glad tidings to his soldiers and this served to boost the morale and courage of the army.

It is famously recorded that when all the ships had anchored on the coastline, Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād burnt them all. His

reason for this act was so that there should be no other path except for victory or death. It is regarding this incident that Iqbal the poet said,

طارق چو برکنارہ اندلس سفینہ سوخت
When Ṭāriq burnt all his ships on the shore

گفتند کار تو بے نگاہ خرو خطاست
His people cried out, intelligence suggests that you have acted wrongly!

دوریم از سواد وطن باز چوں رسیم؟
So far we are from our homeland, how will we possibly return to it?

ترک سبب ز روئے شریعت کجا رواست
Discarding the means is forbidden from even an Islamic perspective

خندید و دست خویش بہ شمشیر برد و گفت:
In response, Ṭāriq smiled, placed his hand on his sword and declared,

”ہر ملک ملک ماست کہ ملک خدائے ماست!“

“Every land is our land, since they are all the lands of our Allah!”

Ṭāriq descended with his army onto the shores of the ‘Rock of Gibraltar’. From there he advanced to the coast of the ‘Green Island’ and conquered it without much of a fight. After that, Roderick deployed his commander-in-chief, Theodomir with a huge army to face off with Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād. After several battles, one after the other - and being defeated in each one - his courage gave in and he wrote to his king, Roderick, “God knows if the people I am waging war against ‘have fallen from the sky’ or ‘burst forth from the ground’. The only viable option is for you to advance with your powerful army and take on these people.” Roderick received his commander-in-chief’s

letter and promptly advanced with a powerful army numbering 70,000 soldiers.

On the other hand, Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr too sent reinforcements comprising of 5,000 soldiers to Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād. His army now totalled 12,000. Most probably, Joleen and his friends were not included in this 12,000.

These two armies came face to face in a place called 'Wādī Al-Laka'. It is here that Ṭāriq delivered that historic speech transmitted down, generation to generation. Every word of this speech tells you of the resolve, bravery, and absolute sacrifice of Ṭāriq. Here are a few excerpts from that historic speech:

"O my warriors, where shall you flee? Behind you is the sea and before you, the enemy. By Allah! You have no other path except that you be true in your covenant with Allah and remain steadfast. Remember you are more helpless in this land than orphans are on the eating mat of a miserly master. Your enemy is here to face you with a huge army and ample weaponry. They are equipped with abundant food supplies. As for you, you have only your swords and nothing else. You have no other food rations except that which you seize from your enemy. If you prolong in this state, you will become victims of poverty and hunger and you will then be unable to gain any form of victory. Your courage will diminish. And instead of the fear and awe you possess, the enemy will become bold against you. To avoid this unfortunate series of events, there is only one path for you and that is, you face off most steadfastly to this oppressive king, whose fortified city has thrown him before you. If you will prepare yourselves for death, then you have a golden opportunity to defeat the enemy. Do not feel that I am inciting you to face off to dangers and I myself will not participate. In the attack, I shall be in the frontline, where the chance of survival is least.

The help and protection of Allah Ta'āla is with you. This act of yours will benefit you both in this world as well as the next. (And) Remember! I will be in the forefront of that which I am inviting you towards. When both armies meet, my strong desire is to attack Roderick, their oppressive leader. Allah willing, he shall meet his end at my hands. Fight with me. If after the demise of Roderick, I meet my end then at least, I will have freed you from Roderick. You have no shortage of brave and intelligent warriors to lead you after my passing. But should I meet my end before facing Roderick, then remain steadfast and attack him. And if you are deprived of conquering this land, then console yourselves by killing Roderick, for after that the enemy will lose courage."

As is, Ṭāriq's army was already prepared for battle and the desire to attain martyrdom. This sermon of Ṭāriq, only served to breathe a new lease of enthusiasm. Putting their bodies and lives on the line, they fought most gallantly. This battle continued for eight consecutive days. Both sides gave it their all in heroic combat, with victory eventually coming to the lot of the Muslims. Roderick and his army were soundly defeated and in fact, Roderick met his end in this battle. Some narrations suggest that Ṭāriq himself took the honours of slaying Roderick, whilst other narrations report that his unmanned horse was found on the beach, implying that he probably drowned to death.

This victory, which came after a difficult week-long battle, was the beginning of Muslims entering Europe. Spain proved the catalyst for this. Muslims went on conquering all the cities of Spain including its capital city, Toledo. They even entered France, reaching the foot of the French Mountain, 'Pyrenees'.

It was for these God-fearing warriors that 'Allāmah Iqbāl remarked mirroring the sentiments of Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād:

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It was for these God-fearing warriors that 'Allāmah Iqbāl remarked mirroring the sentiments of Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād:

یہ غازی یہ تیرے پر اسرار بندے
جنہیں تو نے بخشا ہے ذوقِ خدائی

*These warriors, they are Your mysterious servants,
whom You have blessed with fervour for the Divine.*

دو نیم ان کی ٹوکری سے صحرا و دریا
سمٹ کر پہاڑ ان کی ہیبت سے رائی

*They are those split in half the wilderness and the sea split in half,
and by whom mountains crumble into dust out of awe.*

Muslims then ruled over Spain for 800 years. During this time, Spain became the beacon of knowledge and intelligence and the heart of culture and civilisation. Muslim Spain was regarded to be the most advanced nation on earth at its time.

With the scene of these historical incidents in our bosoms, we initiated our journey from the highway that would take us to Granada. There was a slight shade of cloud cover overhead. We gradually but courageously advanced along our journey flanked by the green and lush mountains. At the foot of these mountains and valleys were beautiful and proportionate olive plantations as far as the eye could see. The imagination was fixed on the brave Muslim warriors that once ascended and descended these mountains and valleys. Today, we were driving along a clean and smooth road. If mountains were a hindrance before, today they have carved out roads through them. But 1,300 years ago, those desert dwellers were forced to painstakingly and courageously traverse these difficult terrains eventually reaching the foot of the 'Pyrenees' Mountains.

At short intervals along the way, we would pass by small villages and several average sized towns. From the names of

these villages, one could tell that these were actually Arabic names that had been altered and spoilt.

For instance, we came across a village by the name, 'Casa Bermaja'. 'Casa' is actually 'Qasr' in Arabic, implying that the actual name of this village was 'Qasr Bermaja'. Because this is a predominantly mountainous region, you will find a mountain in practically every village. At the peak of every mountain you will find a church, the Minaret of it similar in appearance to the Minaret of a Masjid.

After the fall of Muslim Spain, command was given for all Masjids to be turned into churches. Probably these churches that we now see on the mountain tops were all Masjids at one stage. The Adhān of all these Masjids could probably be heard all over.

Today however, these minarets are perceived to be speaking with their self-evident situation:

زمزموں سے جس کے لذت گیر اب تک گوش ہے

*It still rings in the ear, the sweetness of the utterances which were
snatched,*

کیا وہ تکبیر اب ہمیشہ کے لیے خاموش ہے

Will those Takbīr now, forever remain silent?

IN LAWSHĀ / LOXA (LOJA)

We planned on reaching Granada before sunset. Due to this, Sa'īd was driving pretty fast. For my part, I continued narrating to him various historical accounts which he listened to with great interest and with it, a sense of admonishment and grief. After about two hours of journeying, we noticed the signs of a big city.

In my opinion, I thought these were probably the suburbs of Granada. But after some time, I saw a sign written, Loja and I sat amazed... I thought to myself that this is probably a spoilt version of Loxa/Lawshā, the historic city of Muslim Spain. After inquiring, I was indeed proven correct. I cannot even recall how many times I came across mention of this city in the books.

The famous historian and linguist of Spain, *Lisān Ad-Dīn Ibn Al-Khaṭṭāb* (d. 1374/776 AH.) was a resident of this very city. His recorded historical work on Granada, '*Al-Iḥāṭah Fī Akhbār-Ghranāṭa*' is considered a reliable historical account of Granada. In discussing Loja, '*Muqri*' the famous historian, wrote '*Nafḥ At-Ṭīb*' (10 volumes) which later became the best historical account of not only Loja, but Muslim Spain in its entirety, in terms of its political, academic and cultural achievements and background.

This was that very Loja, which under Muslim rule, was the most advanced and famous city in the province of Granada. Great scholarly giants were born here. It is about this city that many historical accounts were penned on the daring nature and true valour of Muslim soldiers in their battle against the Christians.

The Catholic King of Castille (*Qushtālah*), Ferdinand (d. 1482/887 AH.) attacked this city, and under the leadership of *Shaykh 'Alī Al-'Aṭṭār*, 3,000 resolute and steadfast Muslims

volunteered to face this test. These gallant soldiers were successful in driving back Ferdinand and his army.

The Muslims defended this city with their blood and sweat. Four years after this incident, Ferdinand again attacked this city. Unfortunately for the Muslims, this time around, - greater than swords and arrows - Ferdinand had 'armed himself' with conspirators, schemers, and spies from amongst the Muslims to infiltrate. The result of this was that Muslims then lost Granada, so much so that today, we are forced to refer to books just to recognise the name of this city.

Granada is approximately 25 miles from Loja. It thus took us less than half-an-hour to reach the outskirts of Granada. Upon entering the city, we did not know of any road or hotel address. We stopped the car at a roadside and inquired from a shopkeeper about a suitable hotel. Because we knew no Spanish, we were unsuccessful in our attempt. There are very few who understand English here.

This is precisely the condition of nearly the entire Europe, with the exception of Britain. If you travel to any country in Europe, you will find that, let alone understanding English, the people have no interest in speaking it. They take pride in conversing in their own language. This slave-like mindset is prevalent among our Asian and African nations. They regard being conversant in the English language to be the criteria for knowledge and greatness. They take pride in speaking and writing English to such an extent, that they spoil a good portion of their own languages. They forcefully inject many English words into their own languages without any logical and understandable reason.

In the end, we did not find any shopkeeper within the vicinity of that store who could speak English. Sa'īd recalled that he saw a tourist centre. He was certain that there should be someone there who can understand English. He

disembarked from the vehicle and proceeded to make enquiries. Because the vehicle was parked in an inappropriate place, I remained seated in it. Whilst waiting, I began looking around. I noticed a sign on the road written 'Alpojara Road'. This was definitely a spoilt version of 'Al-Fujara', which was an old area of Granada.

At present, every such name in Spanish that begins with 'Al' is originally an Arabic word. By briefly reflecting over these names, one may easily recognise the original Arabic name.

Sa'id returned after a short while with the directions of the Luz Hotel, the largest hotel in Granada. It was not far from where we were. After a bit of searching, we located the hotel. There was a convenient parking facility on the hotel premises. We therefore parked our vehicle there and entered the hotel. We were accommodated on the 11th floor. We had a fabulous view of Granada city from our hotel balcony.



We noticed many buildings with an ancient look to them. Behind all this was the summit of the Sierra Nevada Mountain draped in ice, inviting us to view its breath-taking beauty. The

city of Granada is positioned at the foot of this mountain. How many lesson-filled scenes and revolutions wouldn't this ice mountain have witnessed on its surface? How many conquerors celebrating, how many funerals of the conquered, how many cultures joyfully exhibiting and making their way to this land in buoyant mood and eventually, buried in sombre atmosphere!? For centuries, the Sierra Nevada Mountain had witnessed all these occurrences. If it had a tongue, it would say,

بازیچہ اطفال ہے دنیا مرے آگے * ہوتا ہے شب و روز تماشا مرے آگے

The world is but child's play in front of me,

Comotions occur night and day in front of me.

In Roman, 'Granada' means a 'pomegranate fruit'. This city came to be known as 'pomegranate' for reasons not understood. When Muslims conquered Spain, there was no city with this name. Today, where Granada is situated, was called Al-Bira (Elvira). This city was inhabited only around the 4th Islamic century. It is then, for whatever reason, that the name was changed to Granada from Al-Bira.

At the time, Granada was not only the most advanced city of Muslim Spain, it was also its most beautiful and cultured city. In terms of scenery, climate, and wealth, it was considered a sample of Jannah. On the one end of this city was the Sierra Nevada Mountain, which is considered a portion of the 'Shaleer Mountainous Region', whilst on the other end was a beautiful river known as 'Shanil'. Today, it is called 'Genil'. This is the same very river regarding which Lisān Ad-Dīn remarked,

وَمَا لِمِصْرَ تَفْخَرُ بِنِيلِهَا وَأَلْفٌ مِنْهُ فِي شَنِيلِهَا

"What pride can Miṣr (Egypt) possibly express over its 'Nīl (Nile)'? When 'Shanil' is equal to a thousand 'Nīls'(Niles)."

In this statement, the light-hearted point is that, since the west regarded the letter 'Sha' to denote the number 1,000, by adding 'Sha' to 'Nīl' it would become 'Shanīl'. From this, the message *Lisān Ad-Dīn* intended on conveying, was that 'Shanīl' is a thousand times superior to the 'Nīl'.



Apart from the mountains and rivers, this city was an absolutely splendid and lush grassland, with several fabulous waterfalls serving to perfect its beauty. In praising this city, *Lisān Ad-Dīn* wrote,

بَلَدٌ تَحْفُفُ بِهِ الرِّيَاضُ كَأَنَّهُ وَجْهٌ جَمِيلٌ وَالرِّيَاضُ عِذَارُهُ

"Gardens have enveloped this city from all sides, such that it (the city) gives off the appearance of a charming face, with the gardens resembling its cheeks."

وَكَأَنَّهَا وَادِيَهُ مَعْصَمٌ غَادَةٌ وَمِنْ الْجُسُورِ الْمُحْكَمَاتِ سَوَارُهُ

"And its rivers resemble a delicate female's forearm with the bridges serving at its bangles."

In respect to its material resources, this region was extremely wealthy. It was replete with gold, silver, lead, iron, and copper mines. Silk too was prevalent and in abundance. The jungles too were filled with a variety of scented woods. In short, Allah *Ta'ālā* had granted this region ample wealth of various forms. It is for this reason that this city remained the capital of Muslim Spain for a very long time. And when war broke out against the Muslims of Spain, Muslims of all cities took refuge in this city as their last sanctuary. The result was that the population shot up significantly. It was indeed the largest and most advanced city of Muslim Spain. The standard and criteria of its education were such that it became well-renowned the world over. Christians from royal families would consider it a matter of pride to enrol their children in this city.

Muslims ruled over this land for over 800 years. In that time, they lit the lamps of culture and civilisation which were unparalleled at the time. But it is a fact that when materialism and luxurious lifestyles became the order of the day, they gradually slackened in their concern for religious affairs and they became oblivious of the hereafter. Then despite their various achievements, this could not prevent their decline and eventual downfall.

Granada was that city looking at which western envoys would be dazzled, yet sadly, a time came in history when Abū 'Abd-Allah was forced to hand over the keys of this very same Granada, to Ferdinand and Isabella, to spare his life. This was that very same Granada that had thousands of its great Arabic manuscripts burning for weeks; whose Masjids were forcibly converted to churches; where Muslims were forcibly converted to Christianity, and whose womenfolk were raped.

Eventually, this land became so constrained on Muslims, that after a time, there was not a single soul to recite the Kalimah (fundamental declaration of Islam). Probably no nation on earth experienced a heart-breaking history close to

anything like it. Sa'īd and I continued gazing steadily over our balcony onto the Sierra Nevada Mountain and the city at the foot of this mountain. I began recounting and visualising the historical accounts until the sun had set.

We could not eat lunch in the afternoon that day. We were thus quite hungry. We felt it appropriate to go down to the kitchen and eat some food, but our hotel kitchen was still closed. We therefore decided to visit a nearby restaurant. This also served as an excuse for a bit of sightseeing. We exited the hotel and realised that this was indeed the heart of the city. It was a beautiful and fashionable portion of the city. The restaurants we visited within the vicinity informed us that they do not open before 8 pm. We continued walking further along the road on which the hotel was situated.

Ahead, we noticed a signboard written, 'Alhambra' and with it, an arrow pointing in the direction of Alhambra. We promptly followed the arrow. Upon proceeding a further distance ahead, there came a four-way intersection. The sign for Alhambra indicated to the right. We therefore turned and proceeded in that direction. This was comparatively a narrower road that had a long line of shops on it. On its right and left, there were many small old-fashioned lanes which bore testimony to ancient architecture. This seemed like an old locality of Granada. We stopped for a cup of tea in a teahouse along this road. We then anxiously proceeded further in the hope of finding some historical reminder.

After walking a distance, at the corner of a public square, I noticed an old building made from ancient stones which stood out from the surrounding buildings. On top of this building, there was a triangular shaped Minaret, similar to what I had seen on the road from Malaga. It gave the appearance of an absolutely magnificent Masjid. We very enthusiastically went towards it. There were a couple of beggars sitting close to its door. The central door which was made from dark brown wood

was closed. But in-between this door there was a small opening which one could enter by bowing down. Upon entering, we noticed a dark veranda, on the right and left of which was a large door to enter a building. The left door was closed but it was possible to enter from the right. Upon peeping inside, we realised that it was a massive church. There were several Christian congregants performing Christian rituals.



We left the building, but the heart testified to the fact that this was surely a Masjid, later converted to a church. We were indeed proven right. Upon inquiring, we came to know that this was 'Jāmi'ah Granāṭa'. This was once the largest Masjid of Granada.

This came as a sudden blow to the heart that a Masjid, where for centuries, believers in the oneness of Allah would prostrate before their Sustainer; that very same Masjid where the Adhān for the five times Ṣalāh would ring out thereby illuminating the entire atmosphere, is today enveloped in the darkness of kufr (disbelief) and shirk (polytheism).

پوشیدہ تری خاک میں سجدوں کے نشان ہیں * خاموش اذانیں ہیں تری بادِ سحر میں

There are marks of prostration left in your soil,

Hushed calls for prayer are [heard] in your fresh morning breeze.

The Christians who snatched Spain away from the Muslims were overly extreme, biased, short-sighted, and thoughtless. After grabbing power, order was given for all Masjids to be forcibly converted to churches. All the Masjids of Spain thus became churches. This great Masjid too also became the target of this oppressive command. The graves of the two Christian conquerors of Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella are in this Masjid. On account of their extreme and disruptive approach, no Masjid remained in this land.

Some western writers, in defending this Christian barbarity, aver that the order to forcibly convert Masjids to churches was a retaliatory measure, since Muslims too forcibly converted many churches to Masjids. The Christians therefore acted on this basis. But the truth is that this defence of the Christians is far from the truth and highly misleading.

Firstly, incidents where churches were converted to Masjids were far and few. No example and parallel is found in the history of Muslim rule over Muslim Spain that is comparable to the ruthless and extreme approach of Christians who wiped out every standing Masjid.

The Islamic stance is that if any land was conquered by virtue of the sword (a war was necessitated), then such a land and its buildings are at the discretion of Muslims. Included in this discretion, is to put down the places of worship of the Christians, or alternatively, convert them to Masjids. Despite this choice, Muslims exercised it very limitedly. In certain strategic areas, only out of extreme need did Muslims convert

churches to Masjids, whilst many churches were left untouched.

As for such lands that were overtaken by means of a treaty (without bloodshed), especially when a pact was reached with the disbelievers not to interfere with their places of worship, I have not come across even one incident of Muslims destroying or forcibly converting their places of worship into Masjids in the books of history.

On the contrary, the Christians did not conquer Granada after a battle, but they overtook it through a treaty (without bloodshed). When Ferdinand and Isabella snatched Alhambra from Abū 'Abd-Allah, they had signed a detailed pact comprising of sixty-seven detailed 'Acts' which was signed by all of them.

Amongst the various conditions clearly listed in this pact were:

- Regardless of a Muslim's material standing (whether poor or rich), no harm will be caused to his life and property, and he is at liberty to reside wherever he wishes.
- The Christians will not interfere in the religious affairs of Muslims and they (Muslims) will not face any obstacles in fulfilling any of their fundamental religious obligations.
- The Masjids and Waqf (endowment) properties will be left as are and no Christian will be permitted to enter any Masjid.
- Muslims will be bound by Shariah regulations in their trade and business dealings.

- Any Christian that had already embraced Islam prior to this will not be forced to forsake his new religion and return to Christianity. If any Muslim wishes to embrace Christianity, then one Muslim and one Christian will be appointed as arbitrators to verify if any form of force was used.

(This list is not exhaustive. We have intentionally sufficed on a handful).

Despite signing this agreement, in truth, the status of this pact was as good as a piece of scrap paper. Not even one condition remained without being openly violated.

The flames of religious fanaticism and bigotry had totally engulfed Ferdinand, Isabella, and the priests of that time. But even more disturbing and perplexing is to read of these so called "unbiased and partial" historians, attempting to justify the brutality forced upon the Muslims. If an explanation should be offered for these tragic events, then the truth is this was nothing but punishment for the wrongdoings of Muslims.

Nevertheless, with greater remorse and understanding we proceeded passed this building. We then took directions to Alhambra and gradually made our way. Here again, we had to walk past several roads and alleys. This entire area is considered the old locality of Granada. In one place, we again spotted a huge building. We saw droves of youth there. We came to know that this was a university, the *La Madraza University*. This was a name altered and spoilt from '*Madrasah*'.

Under Muslim rule, this was the largest university of Granada, which not only served Granada, but catered to students from distant western lands too. Only Allah knows how many of our great Ulama (scholars) had at one time in history dished out their oceans of knowledge in this institute. Now it is

not even possible to ascertain their names and numbers. In the mind, I could envisage giant scholars, the likes of '*Allāmah Shātibī*, *Ibn Al-Khaṭīb*, and *Abū Al-Ḥasan* (May Allah Ta 'ālā have Mercy on them) walking in and out this institute.

I later happened to browse through an English booklet on Granada, which noted that in the era of the Muslims, this was considered one of Granada's most fabulous buildings. Its central door was made of marble. Its arches were in the shape of a horseshoe. Attractive enamel decorated its roof. Its windows had Arabic writing engraved in it. This booklet also noted that this was a very large university of Muslims that produced the likes of *Ibn Al-Fujār*, *Ibn Marzūq*, *Abū Al-Barakāt*, *Al-Balqīnī*, *Ibn Ṭā'ūs*, and *Ibn Fīfa*. This university was built by King Yusuf I. Later during the era of the Christians, Charles I gave it a new look in 1526 (932 AH.) He also made renovations to the building.

Going ahead from La Madraza, whilst manoeuvring our way from alley to alley, we found ourselves back on the hotel road. At the end of this road, we noticed a 'public square' with a big statue in the centre of it and a fountain springing forth. The name of this 'square' was Bib-Rambla. Upon enquiry, I came to know that in the era of the Muslims, this was the biggest 'public square' of Granada. It was known as '*Bāb Ar-Ramlah*' under Muslim rule, and later altered to '*Bib-Rambla*'. From this 'square', several small roads branched out into several directions. The names of these roads were ancient too. One of these was '*Zacatin*' which in Arabic was originally '*Shāri' As-Saqāṭin*'. Another of these roads had the name '*Boabdil*' which in Arabic was '*Shāri' Abu 'Abdillah*'.

From here, the signpost indicated left to Alhambra (*Alḥamra*). We thus followed that direction. This was an expansive and wide road which ended a little distance ahead with a building. To the left of this building the road narrowed pretty much. At the entrance of this road, there was a

signboard which indicated that this road was going to 'Albaicin'. 'Albaicin' was actually the old locality of Granada known as 'Hayyu'l-Bayāzin'. Albaicin was an altered and concocted version of this name.

It is said that many old landmarks of Muslims are found on this road. But from here on, the road became pretty dark. Instead of proceeding ahead, we decided on making a U-turn. From here, on the left there was a very narrow lane which led to Alhambra. After turning into this lane, we realised that it leads up to a mountain. Upon enquiry, we were told that Alhambra was a distance away, approximately 1.5 miles away. It closed at 5.00 pm and reopened in the morning at 9.30am for tourists. Our objective was not to travel to Alhambra at the time, but merely to acquire statistics and to sightsee this old locality. We therefore purchased two booklets on Granada which I have indicated to previously. We then returned to our hotel.

ALḤAMRĀ (ALHAMBRA)

The very next morning, we had an early breakfast and boarded a taxi to Alhambra. The same road we had walked along last night continued up a mountain until finally, after ascending this mountain the driver dropped us off at the door of the 'Alhambra' fortress, situated at the peak of the mountain.

This huge historic fortress was built in the 4th century. After that, the leaders of Granada that followed continued making slight amendments until finally, *Muḥammad ibn Al-Aḥmar An-Naṣrī* (Death - 635 AH) made wholesale changes and gave this fortress a royal look.

Then, at the end of the 7th century, his son *Muḥammad ibn Aḥmar*, known famously as 'Ghālīb-Billāh', constructed the royal palace known as 'Qaṣr Al-Ḥamrā'. His sons later made several amendments to this palace resulting in it becoming an architectural masterpiece of the time.



The entire surface area of Alhambra is 736 metres long and approximately 200 metres wide. This includes the fortress, the royal palace, and the orchards. Around it, there is a firm defensive wall, portions of which still stand from that era.



The taxi driver drove us within the confines of this wall comprising of beautiful orchards and brought us to the point where the actual buildings of the fortress and palace began. We were informed that the door of the fortress was closed, and it would open after 15 minutes. That very same Alhambra which we had heard of often from our childhood years was right before our eyes. This was surely a present and perceived commentary of,

﴿وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ﴾

'You grant honour to whoever You please and disgrace whosoever You please'. [Surah Āl- 'Imrān, Verse 26]

How many kings arrogantly declared before its walls and from within it, "It is I and no other!" How many proud and haughty kings were disgracefully dethroned within these very walls? How many a king was crowned in this very palace? How many heads of princes were ripped off here? How many secrets has history hidden within these ruins? Yet today, this building still stands. It continues providing a lesson for all those who stand beside it.

After a few minutes, the doors of the fortress opened, and we were the first ones to enter. At every step, the ruined buildings told a story of the past. The closest historical sight to the door is 'Burj Al-Hirāsah' which is the largest tower of Alhambra. It is also known as 'Al-Qaşba'. The Muslims would occasionally hoist aloft their flag from this very tower. But when the last Muslim ruler, Abū 'Abdillāh handed over the keys to Ferdinand on a silver tray, then the very first thing Ferdinand did was to remove the flag and order his priests to place a wooden cross instead. This cross still stands in the same spot. It is sufficient to slice the heart of any Muslim entering Alhambra.

This portion of 'Burj Al-Hirāsah' was the military and defensive quarters. Around it are still several remnants of buildings, resembling a military set-up. The royal palace is situated on the eastern side, a short distance away.

Along the way, one has to pass by several run-down buildings and ruins. In some places, the worn-out and dilapidated walls of small rooms; in others, cells behind iron bars probably used as jails; in yet others, extremely deep wells; whilst in others, trenches and hidden pathways; not to forget the stairs and defensive walls. In short, this was an entire defence fortress with all its equipment. But today, it seemed more like a toy-house wherein children, who after fighting amongst themselves left all their toys strewn around the place.

After making our way past the military fortress and royal palace, there was yet another door to enter the palace. From here, those historically magnificent palaces began, the beauty of which made Alhambra famous throughout the world. Initially that area of the palace comes which is historically known as 'Māsida' or 'Marbad Al-Aswad'. This is a courtyard surrounded by splendid arched balconies, in the centre of which there is a built-in pond. Under this pond, there are four lion statues without eyes, noses, or faces, probably intentionally omitted to avoid an idol-like appearance. From the mouth water would continuously emit as in a fountain. This is considered an extremely beautiful section of the palace.



Next to this section, is the portion known as the 'Qā'idah As-Sufrā'. It is here that the king would meet foreign envoys. Its walls have 'Surah Al-Mulk' artistically written on them. It is here that the queen's residential quarters were situated. The royal hot baths too were situated here. In all these buildings, marvellous looking marble was used. Such fantastic enamelling of the stones was done that even today, with the technology and machinery, it would be difficult to match the same.

لا غالب إلا الله

On the walls and ceilings, the words, لا غالب إلا الله (Lā Ghāliba Illa Allāh - 'Sovereignty belongs entirely to Allah') were artistically written, a distinguishing mark of the 'Banī Aḥmar'. It also tells of the final outcome of Alhambra (Al-Ḥamra). In the rooms, the stones were carved and Arabic poems had been artistically written in 'Andalusian script', reading all of which required time. Here too is the famous 'Two Sisters Hall' which have been made from two separate marble stones but are amazingly identical. This is why it is famously called the 'Two Sisters Hall'. This was also the room of the grief-stricken mother of the last Muslim king, Abu 'Abdullah. She was also the wife of the great king and warrior, Abul Ḥasan. She totally despised her son's link with the Christians. From the windows positioned on the northern end of the building, the city opens up to the eye. There is also a view of the famous locality of Granada lying at the foot of the mountain, 'Albaicin' (Hayyul-Bayāzīn). From here, the palace household could view the collective condition of the city at any given time.

Adjoining the palace is a beautiful orchard where on the one hand, one may view the charming mountain tops of the Sierra Nevada, whilst on the other, you have the fantastic buildings of Alhambra. This is all before one's very eyes. Despite this orchard now being relatively deserted, no tourist leaves here without being affected by the spectacular scenery. Only Allah knows how beautiful this must have been in its prime and glory days.

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On the north-eastern end of Alhambra there is yet another hill with a chain of buildings and orchards known as

'Generalife' (*Jannat Al- 'Arīf*). One of the governors of Granada built this orchard as a royal recreational facility. The slopes of the Sierra Nevada comprise of many spectacular buildings. In front of these buildings are various types of trees and plants that give the place a lush and green look. From the central door of this building till the palace is a pathway made from a long creeping plant. The walls, roof and central arches have all been carved out using plants and greenery looking at which, one is forced to laud praises on the humorous nature of the makers.

Looking at this magnificent palace and the painful fact that Muslims were forced to surrender it to the Christians after 800 years of rule, one cannot possibly imagine what would have gone through the hearts of the Muslims. By merely thinking of it, the 'liver comes to the mouth'. Even *Abū 'Abdillāh* - known for his foolishness and incapability, and who himself inevitably played a significant role in the loss of Granada - when leaving Granada, he gazed down to Alhambra from a hilltop and he could simply not hold back his tears and began sobbing like a child. His mother *'Ā'ishah*, knowing too well of her son's inability, retorted, "O my son! You were just like the dead, unable to display any form of valour and bravery in the battlefield, what benefit is there in sobbing like a baby now?"

At approximately 11.00 am, we returned to our hotel. We emptied our hotel and made our way to the ground floor where we immediately embarked on our journey. Our destination was Cordoba (*Qurṭubah*), which was approximately 200 kilometres away.

Modern technology has made things so easy that even an absolute stranger is able to find his way on the road network without much difficulty. We followed simple directions linking us to the Cordoba highway and without much of a hassle, we were on our way.

It was not long after we had left Granada, that we passed by a green and lush mountainous region. These were average sized mountains spread out as far as the eye could see. In between these were valleys draped in greenery. The road would practically encircle a particular mountain, eventually reaching its summit. As soon as we would descend to a valley, we would notice another majestic mountain. These mountains were virtually cover and security on the outskirts of Granada. Prior to the downfall of Granada, many Muslim warriors had blocked the path of the enemies in these mountains.

Upon the cycle of mountains coming to an end, a chain of villages followed. In every village, you would certainly find a church high up the summit of the mountain. The Minaret of each one was similar to what we had seen on our way from Malaga. In all probability, these were Masjids under Muslim rule, which the Christians later converted to churches.

After approximately three hours of journey, we noticed the signs of Cordoba in the horizon.

QURṬUBAH (CORDOBA)

Cordoba is one of the oldest cities of Spain. Even before the advent of 'Īsā ﷺ, mention is made of this city being vibrant and active. It was also known as Cordoba then. When Muslims conquered Cordoba, it was under the rule of the 'Qutwis'. Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād conquered it in the year 92 AH (721 AD). The Muslim army were very considerate with the populace.

Upon conquering Spain, Muslims initially settled for Seville (*Ishbiliyya*) as their capital. In the era of Sulaymān ibn 'Abd Al-Malik, the governor Samah ibn Mālik Khawlānī moved the capital from Seville to Cordoba. It then remained the capital of Muslim Spain for many centuries. In 138 AH., when 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān Ad-Dākhil established the 'Umayyad Caliphate' here, this city seen significant progress.

The 'Umayyad Dynasty' ruled over Muslim Spain for more than three centuries. After that, the 'Banī Ḥamūd', the 'Banī Jahūr', the 'Banī 'Ibād', 'Murābiṭīn' and the 'Muwaḥḥidīn' ruled over this city. This continued until eventually, the Christian king, Ferdinand took control. All in all, Muslims ruled over this city for 534 years.

In the Muslim era, Cordoba was considered one of the great civilisations of the world. This city consisted of 21 large palaces. In the tenure of the Caliph, Ḥishām Al-Mu'ayyad (366 AH - 399 AH), when a survey was conducted, the number of houses in this city exceeded 250,000. The number of shops exceeded 80,400. In the era of 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān Ad-Dākhil, the Masjids numbered 490. There is mention of as many as 1,600 Masjids in the books of history.

In the height of the glory days of Muslims, Cordoba was a bustling city comprising of spectacular buildings, splendid roads, breath taking bridges, a highly advanced industry (at the

time) and many innovative inventions to facilitate convenience. Historians and linguists have penned separate treatises in discussing Cordoba. The famous historian of Muslim Spain, Muqri' has spared an entire volume for mention of Cordoba.



With regards to experts in the various faculties of knowledge, Cordoba held distinction over other cities. Most of

the internationally renowned personalities of every field in Muslim Spain emanated from Cordoba.

The famous commentator of the Noble Qur'an and commentator of 'Sahih Muslim', 'Allamah Qurṭubī; the master in jurisprudence and philosophy, 'Allamah Ibn Rushd; the leading scholar of the 'Ahl Az-Zāhir' (the literalists) Ibn Ḥazm and the well-renowned expert in medicine and surgery, Abū Al-Qāsim Az-Zahrāwī, all taught in this illustrious city.

The libraries of Cordoba were simply unparalleled and incomparable anywhere in the world. The enthusiasm for the various faculties of knowledge and discussion concerning religious matters reached such unprecedented levels that no house was bereft of its own library. In social circles, the most noteworthy discussion was that 'so and so' has a certain manuscript not found elsewhere. Those who did not show a natural interest in books were not viewed positively in society. There were therefore many who had beautiful bookshelves all in the name of fashion. They would adorn these with numerous books on various subject matters.

In this regard, Muqri' relates an interesting incident of one Ḥaḍramī in his own words. He says,

"I was in need of a rare book. I came to Cordoba in search of it. I made a thorough search of all the bookshops. Eventually, I came to a book auction and found the book I required. Upon seeing it, I could not contain my joy. I began bidding. But just as I would bid, one other person would bid higher. It reached a stage where the figure he had bid was simply out of my reach. I requested the auctioneer to allow me to meet this person making such high bids. The auctioneer pointed out to a person who, from his dressing seemed pretty rich. I went up to him and said, "You seem to be a great Jurist. May Allah Ta'ālā elevate your status. If you are genuinely in need of this book then I withdraw my bid."

He replied,

"No, I am not a Jurist. I am not even aware of what is in this book. But I have very painstakingly built a library in my home, so as to achieve status among the noble of society. In one of my cupboards, I have sufficient space to fit this book in. The cover of this book is beautiful. Its writing too is exemplary. This is the reason I intend on purchasing this book."

I at once remarked,

"The one with no teeth is receiving almonds."

Once, a discussion arose between the famous scholar of Cordoba, 'Allamah Ibn Rushd and a wealthy individual of Seville, Abū Bakr ibn Zahr, about which was better, Cordoba or Seville. Abū Bakr enumerated many virtues and specialities of Seville. In response, 'Allamah ibn Rushd remarked,

"I am unaware of the various virtues and distinctions of Seville that you have made mention of. Albeit, what I do know, is that when any 'Ālim (scholar) passes away in Seville, the family come to Cordoba to sell off his library. And when any musician of Cordoba passes away, his family travel to Seville to get his musical instruments sold."

If this was the love that the masses possessed for the books and libraries, you can well imagine what would have been the condition of the 'Ulamā (scholars)! Historians have even expounded on the enthusiastic nature of the women and children in this regard.

The result of this overwhelming academic fervour was that the residents of Cordoba were looked up to, on account of their nobility, exemplary character, moral behaviour, and simplicity. Despite abundant wealth, spectacular scenery, fantastic climate, and numerous recreational facilities, they

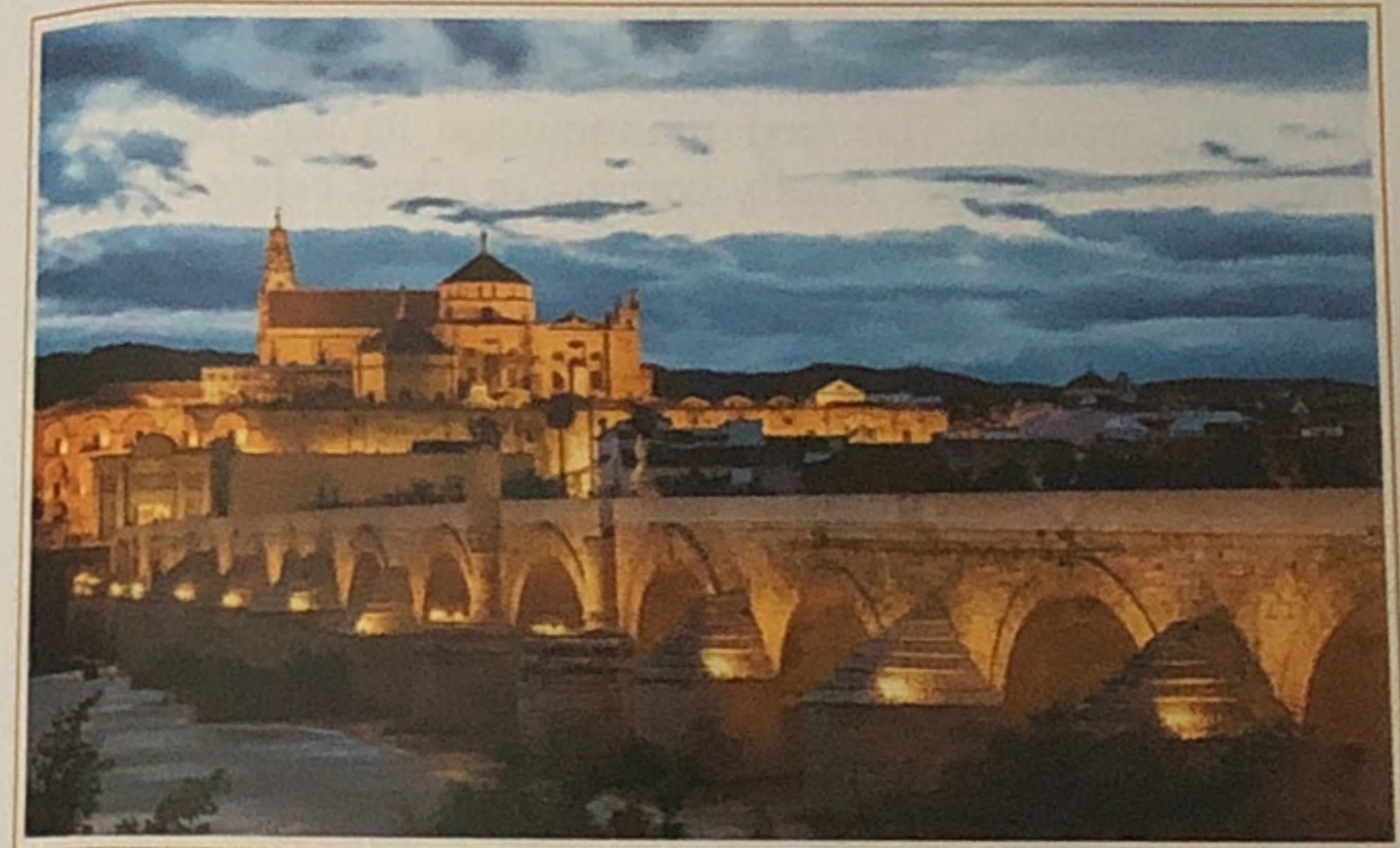
shunned inappropriate conduct and immorality. A resident of Muslim Spain wrote about the residents of Cordoba,

"Among their excellent traits is that they wear the best and cleanest of garments. They are firm in fulfilling their religious obligations. They are regular with Ṣalāh. The residents all hold outmost respect for the Jāmi'ah Masjid of Cordoba. If anyone happens to come across any liquor container, they immediately smash it apart without any thought. They despise all forms of evil. They pride themselves in the following three things; a noble family lineage, military expertise and Islamic knowledge."



The features of Cordoba we would read about in the various books written in its glory days are still there to act as guides for students like myself, but today the Cordoba that was right before my eyes... Alas! A World of difference! No Islam and Īmān, no knowledge and virtue, no Masjids, no historic classrooms, no libraries, no books, no honour, no depth of thought, no intelligence and foresight...!

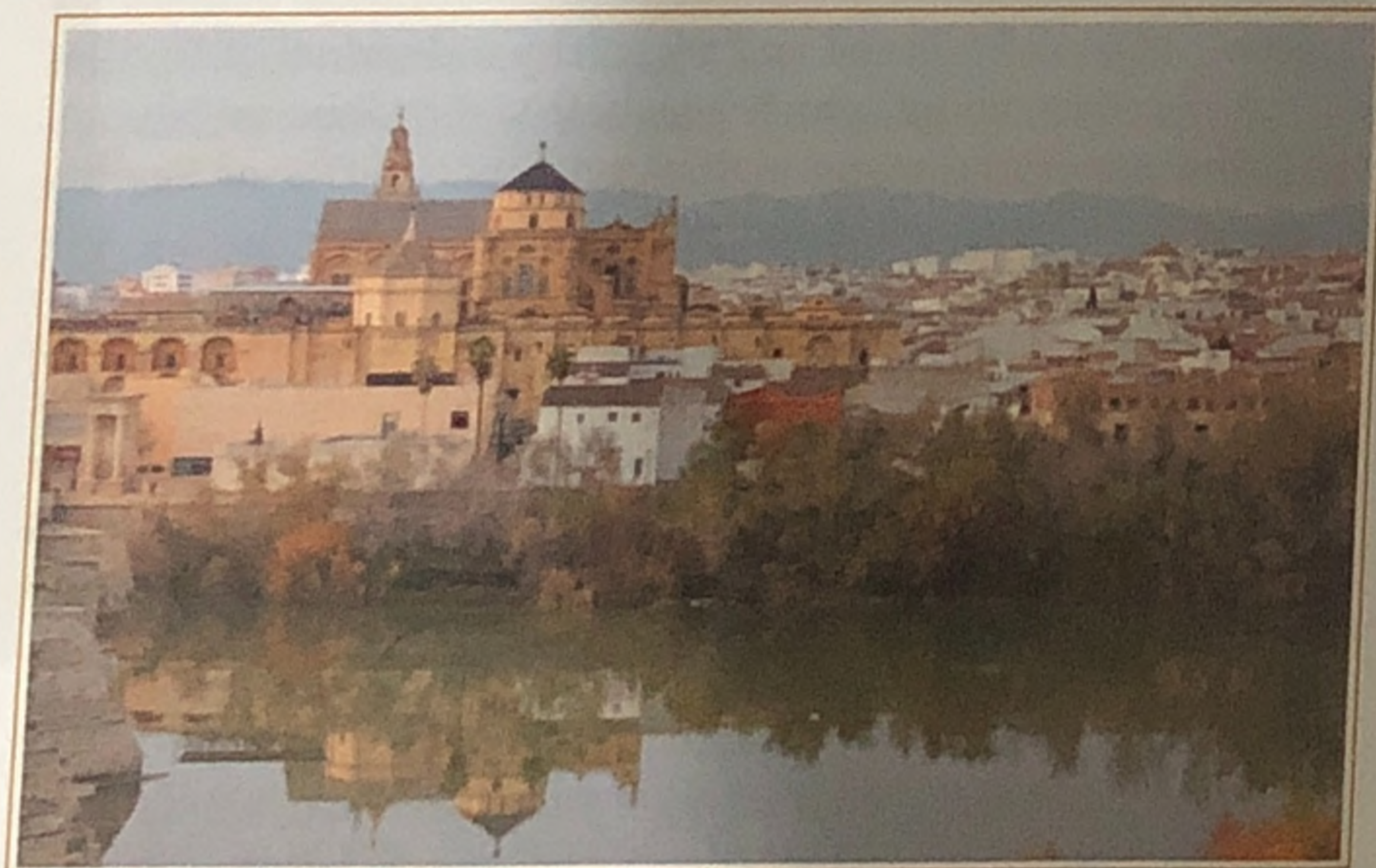
These had, at one stage in history, illuminated this portion of the world, but not anymore...! Before my eyes was a 20th century European city, the vast and expansive roads of which were immersed in materialism. This was a home of disbelief and polytheism. Today, these were the descendants of a city, whose forefathers (the Crusaders) 700 years ago had made its noble residents surrender under the force of the sword. Today, these people could not be described except as worshippers of their egos, all supposedly in the name of progress.



Proceeding past the initial inhabited area of Cordoba, ahead we noticed a river with a bridge constructed on it. This was the famous river of Cordoba, Guadal-Quinur (Wādiu'l Kabīr). Adjoining it, we could see a disused wall most probably used as a safety wall in the old historic Cordoba. After crossing the bridge, we had now officially entered the city. When leaving Granada, we had made enquiries from the reception in the Luz Hotel for a good hotel in Cordoba. We therefore avoided any delay and reached the entrance of the twelve-story hotel, 'Hotel Melia'. This was a famous hotel of Cordoba. Upon

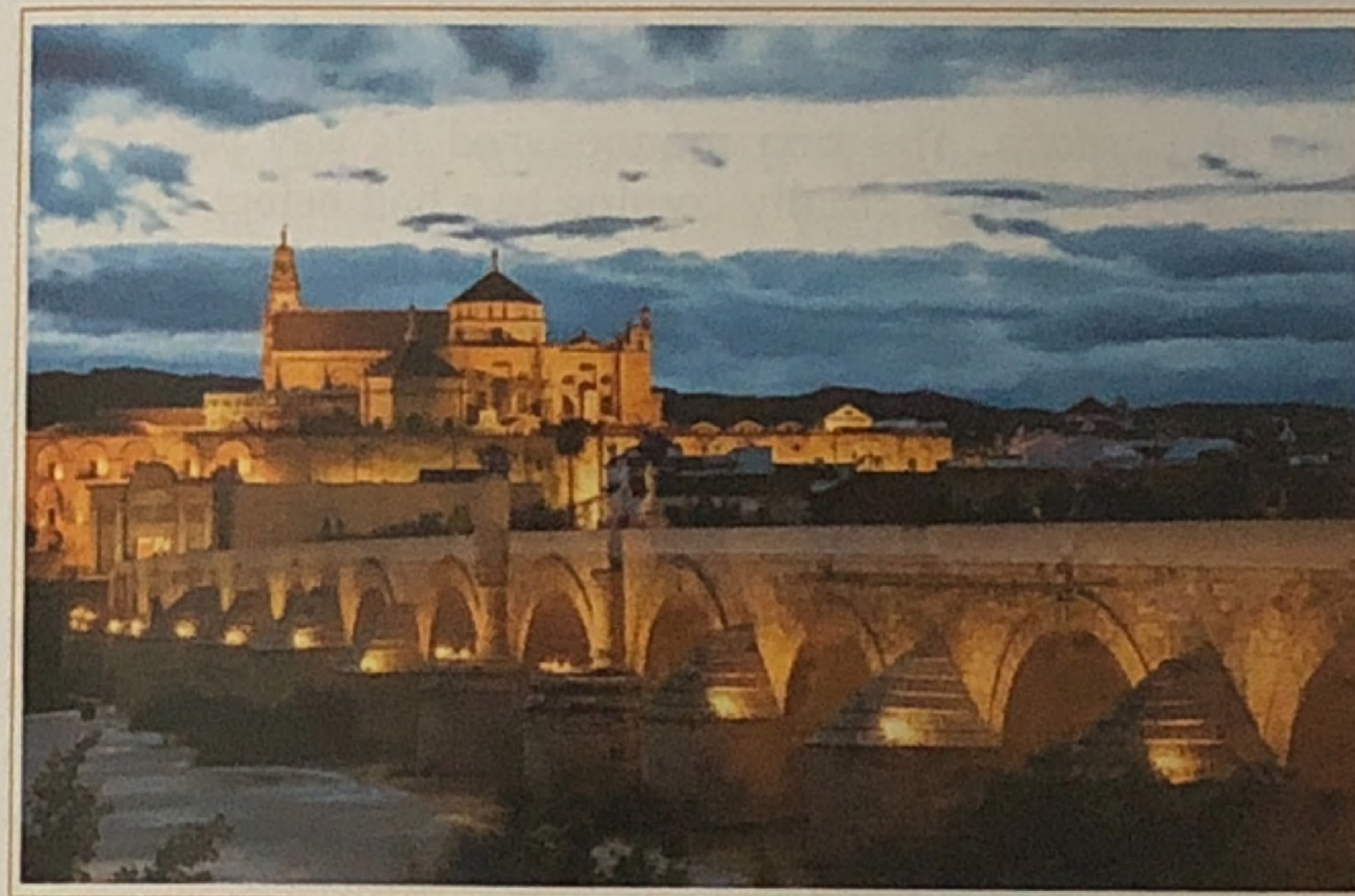
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entering the hotel room, we realised that the standard of this hotel was significantly better than 'Hotel Luz' of Granada.

By the time we had arrived in our hotel it was 1.45 pm. We got to know from the hotel reception that *Jāmi'ah* Cordoba opens for tourists at 4.00 pm. We therefore performed our *Zuhr Ṣalāh* and thereafter partook of a meal in a restaurant. In western countries where *Ḥalāl* (Islamically lawful) food is difficult to come by; a boiled fish meal is the best option. We therefore had fresh fish from the Guadal-Quinur River. This meal was truly sumptuous and energising.

After lunch, we caught a taxi and made our way to *Jāmi'ah* Cordoba. The taxi manoeuvred its way past several roads and buildings, finally coming to a halt before a fortified looking building. The driver informed us that this was *Jāmi'ah* Cordoba. Before our eyes was a building made from ancient stones; an absolutely magnificent and tall building, the walls of which were supported by gigantic pillars.

JĀMI'AH CORDOBA

In the era of the Roman idol worshippers, they had a temple situated precisely where *Jāmi'ah* Cordoba is today. When Christianity spread in Spain, the Christians demolished the temple and constructed a church which was known as 'Vincent'. When the Muslims conquered Cordoba then the same scenario occurred as when the Muslims conquered Damascus. Just as the Damascus church was divided into two, so too in Cordoba, the church was divided into two in accordance with the conditions of the treaty. Half remained a church and the other half became a Masjid. For a significant period, this remained the state of affairs where both, Masjid and church stood.

But when Cordoba became the capital of the Muslims and the population grew at an alarming rate, the Masjid could not accommodate them all. When 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān Ad-Dākhil took over the mantle of the Caliphate, the question of extending Masjid Cordoba arose. There was no other option but to include the church area in the Masjid. But because they had a pact with the Christians that half would remain a church. Islamically, it was not possible to do so without the Christians agreeing. 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān therefore convened a meeting with prominent leaders from the clergy and proposed to purchase the land on which the church stood. He promised to pay them the exact amount they proposed. In the Christian faith, it is permissible to sell a church. The Christians therefore had no religious impediment in selling off this church, despite which, they simply refused to budge. Discussions therefore continued for several days. After prolonged talks, they eventually accepted to sell this piece of land at an extremely exorbitant sum, and with the added condition that they be permitted to construct a church on the outskirts of the city as a replacement for this

one. 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ad-Dākhil accepted their condition and in this manner, this church was incorporated into the Masjid.

After acquiring this vast piece of land upon which the church was, 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān Ad-Dākhil began rebuilding Jāmi'ah Cordoba. The architecture of the Masjid was truly remarkable. An expert from Damascus was tasked with seeing to this. It would take a very long time to complete. But 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān, after initiating the rebuilding, passed away within two years (172 AH). After his passing, his son Hishām followed in his father's footsteps. Within six years, the Jāmi'ah Masjid was completed at a cost of 80,000 Dinars. The 'Banū Umayyad Caliphs' that followed, continued making amendments and extending it until eventually, this became a Masjid comprising of eight floors.

The interior of the Jāmi'ah Masjid was simply unique and unparalleled in its vastness and beauty. Probably no Masjid in the world, even today, has a vast and expansive roof like this Masjid. This Masjid comprised of well fashioned ṣaff (rows) and several magnificent verandas, the roofs of which were domed. On both sides, there were pillars made of marble throughout. Under Muslim rule, the total number of pillars stood at 1,417. The entire surface area was 33,150 squared yards.



Upon the Masjid opening, with our hearts pounding, we very nervously entered. Despite being neglected, the pillars of this once historic Masjid were still attractive. These could be seen spread throughout the length and breadth of this Masjid. But this hall was overcome by darkness and utter silence.



In some history books, it is recorded that there were as many as 360 arches in this Masjid's roof which were built in such a manner that the rays of the sun would enter each arch in accordance to its circulation pattern.

At night, 280 chandeliers would be lit with the number of lanterns standing at 7,425. The entire year's expenses for the oil used in the lanterns would be close to 314 'Manns' (each Mann = +-37.5kgs). 3½ 'Mann' of candle wax and 34½ 'Sers' (each Ser = +-0.9kgs) of thread would be used for making the candles to cover an entire year. Every Jumu'ah half a 'Ser' of 'ūd (Arabian agarwood for fragrance/scent) and a quarter handful of 'anbar (ambergris) would be burnt in this Masjid.

But today, this Masjid is pretty dark during the day. At sporadic intervals, there were a few bulbs providing light, but not sufficient to put off the darkness. It seems like the darkness here is a pure reflection of the darkness of kufr and shirk that has enveloped this Masjid for centuries. However,

وہ سجدہ روح زمین جس سے کانپ جاتی تھی * اسی کو آج ترستے ہیں منبر و محراب

*The illuminated land which would tremble
on account of the prostration;
For this (very prostration) today, the Minbar and
Mihrāb deeply crave for...*

Upon entering, we noticed many rooms built by the Christians on the left end. In many of these, there were idols and statues. They have even destroyed the centre of the Masjid and built a massive cathedral, not to mention the pictures they have hung up on the domed roofs of the spectacular verandas. They have also built a huge stage for their prayer services with seating facilities for congregants.

Looking at the alterations and changes made by the Christians in this church, it is clear that their objective was not

to fulfil any religious need of theirs, but to simply obliterate as many signs of Islam left in these. There is no portion of this church left except that they have made alterations in some way, even at the expense of damaging the building. This clearly makes apparent their extremely wicked nature. They left no stone unturned in plundering every portion of this Masjid.

At most, they left the 'Mihrāb' (a niche in the wall of a Masjid that indicates the Qiblah) of the Masjid and two to three small ṣaff encircled with a string in a corner. Their intention was probably that these may act as remnants of what was once a Masjid. On top of this beautiful 'Mihrāb' were layers of dust, its beauty having withered and faded over the course of the oppressive times.

Close to this, was the minbar (pulpit) on which giant scholars like Qāḍī Mundhir ibn Sa'īd would deliver powerful talks in the then Cordoba atmosphere. In this portion of the Masjid, scholars like 'Allāmah Qurṭubī, 'Allāmah Ibn Rushd, Ḥafīẓ Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr ؒ would have surely performed Ṣalāh. Regardless of the thousands of alterations and discrepancies committed by the Christians, one may still perceive the scent of the worship of those great scholars within this atmosphere.

It was then 'Aṣr time. We left the hotel room with the intention of performing 'Aṣr in Jāmi'ah Cordoba. I am not sure who it was that very senselessly informed us that Masjid Cordoba was open for performing Ṣalāh. This information proved to be absolutely false. There is still no permission to perform Ṣalāh in this Masjid. It is a separate matter altogether if one or two tourists come and perform Ṣalāh on their own.

My friend Sa'īd therefore called out the Adhān. There was not a single soul (apart from us) to respond to the calls of 'Ḥayya 'Alaṣ-Ṣalāh (Hasten towards Ṣalāh). We therefore performed the 'Aṣr Ṣalāh in congregation close to the 'Mihrāb'.

Whilst prostrating on the carpet of this Masjid, it felt as if 800 years had passed by in a split moment, and we were now free from the spiritually barren and void era and into an open atmosphere with the light of *Tawhīd* scattered. This atmosphere was filled with the praises and glory of Allah, The One.

The true meaning of, *سبحان ربّي الأعلى* (Purity belongs to my Lord, The Most-High) became even clearer here.

My Allah is surely beyond the rise and fall of this Masjid. He was the Loftiest Being even when there was no space to accommodate the numbers of those prostrating, and He still is the Loftiest Being now despite there being none to answer the call of '*Ḥayya 'Alaṣ-Ṣalāh*'. Whether there are millions to hymn His praises, or only that many that may be counted on the tips of one's fingers; whether the dwellers of the earth embrace His *Dīn* in their hearts or become overwhelmed at the expense of their evil deeds, it makes no difference in His absolute Oneness and Independence.

یہ نغمہ فصل گل ولالہ کا نہیں پابند بہار ہو کہ حنا لالہ الالہ

This [melody] is not restricted to season of the blooming rose and tulip [i.e. spring];

It has become autumn from spring whilst [the melody of] Lā ilāha illallāh (There is no deity but Allāh) rings.

In this vast and huge Masjid, besides the *Mihrāb*, there was nowhere else that the mind and heart could possibly find solace and contentment. Every other portion of this Masjid was enveloped in the darkness of Christian interference. Upon looking at this state of affairs, my heart was truly hurt.

We sat for a while around the *Mihrāb*. We then fixed our gazes, albeit with a heart full of grief, on those pillars of the Masjid under which at one stage in history, the gatherings of *dhikr*, and teaching and learning Islamic knowledge would take place. This was where mankind was taught the lesson of being cultured and noble. This was where the lanterns of knowledge and etiquette would be lit. This is where the 'crowns' of virtue and piety would be placed on man. These pillars will certainly be reminiscing those enlightened gatherings. The presence of these pillars is sufficient a complaint for the self-honour and integrity of Muslims. This is such a complaint that may be seen with the eyes but not heard with the ears.

We were the only two Muslims in this Masjid. We were both dead silent. After some time, Sa'īd, who was greatly affected by what he had seen, broke his silence and said, "*Taqī Saheb! Let us leave immediately. I am out of breath!*"

It is obvious that this loss of breath did not materialise due to shortage of space or darkness in the building. This was a condition for which neither I possessed a remedy nor he.

We slowly made our way through the exit door on the other end. There was still one remaining blow to 'add salt to the wound'. Just before the exit, we noticed a musician absorbed in playing his guitar. As we passed by him, he began singing to add to his guitar strokes. The following supplication spontaneously emanated from the depths of my heart, 'O Allah! Never allow me again to visit such a Masjid in this helpless state of mine'.

I cannot enumerate the number of historical sites that I have visited in my life, and the many that I have derived lessons from, but the level of grief and pain felt in my heart after visiting *Jāmi'ah Cordoba* was simply incomparable and far too much to bear.

We now understand the sorrowful state in which the late 'Allāmah Iqbāl voiced the lengthy poem in relation to the Masjid Cordoba.

سلسلہ روز و شب نقش گر حادثات سلسلہ روز و شب اصل حیات و ممات

*The succession of day and night, is the sculptor of events,
The succession of day and night, is the basis of life and dead.*

سلسلہ روز و شب تار حریر دورنگ جس سے بناتی ہے ذات اپنی قبائے صفات

*The succession of day and night, is an interwoven,
two-tone silken cloth,*

By which the Divine One produces its apparel of qualities.

تجھ کو پرکھتا ہے یہ مجھ کو پرکھتا ہے یہ سلسلہ روز و شب صیر فی کائنات

It tests you and also reckons with me.

The succession of the day night is the arbitrator in the universe.

WĀDĪ AL KABĪR (THE GUADAL- QUINUR/GUADAL-QUIVIR RIVER) AND ITS BRIDGE

Upon leaving the Masjid, the ground was wet due to a slight drizzle. Proceeding a little ahead in the Qiblah direction of Jāmi'ah Cordoba, we came across an ancient safety door of the city. This was 'Bāb Al-Qanṭara' which was used to enter the city from the southern end. The original door from the Muslim era no longer exists. The door present here was built by a Christian mason.

In front of this door, there was a road running from the east to the west. Across this road, we saw the famous river of Cordoba flowing, Guadalquinur. When entering the city that afternoon we crossed a big and long river. I was sure that it was Guadalquinur since mention is made of this river in the books. Then when I saw a signboard written, 'Guadal-Quinur', I was certain that this was a spoilt and altered version of Wādī Al-Kabīr.



In the old Cordoba, the south of this river was inhabited. After crossing the river on the southern end, the safety door of the city began. It is here that the royal palaces were situated.

In the first Islamic century, when *Ṭāriq ibn Ziyād* was done with the battle of *Wādī Al-Lakā'*, he deputed several armies to various cities of Spain. The freed slave of Caliph *Walīd ibn 'Abdīl Mālik*, *Mughīth Al-Rūmi* was deputed to Cordoba with an army.

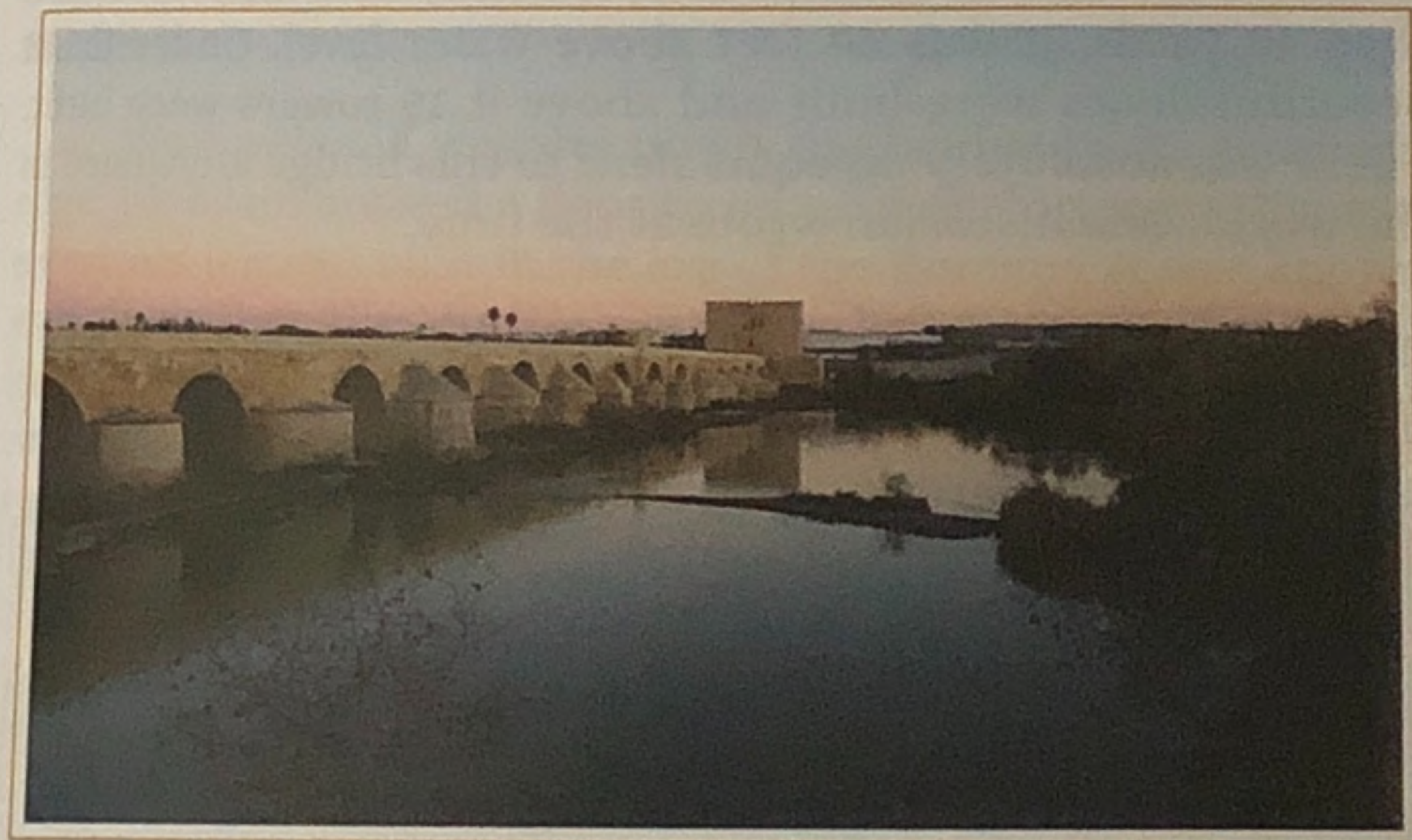
Mughīth approached from the south. He camped at a place called '*Shiqanda*' just before Guadalquivir. In order to conquer Cordoba, he had to firstly cross the river and then take control of the fortified and defensive wall of Cordoba, which was by no means an easy task. But the unseen assistance of Allah *Ta'ālā* was with those who strove in His path. *Mughīth's* spies stopped a shepherd and made enquiries.

The shepherd informed them that out of fear, the leaders of Cordoba have already escaped to '*Shiqanda*' and there are not many soldiers to guard the city at present. The Muslims then enquired about the defensive wall of the city. The shepherd replied that it was extremely fortified and solid. Albeit, one portion of it is broken through which one may make inroads.

Mughīth decided to attack the city at night. Allah *Ta'ālā* sent down the rains in the form of unseen help. Due to excessive rainfall, the galloping sounds of the horses could not be heard, resulting in the Muslim army crossing the bridge without much of a hassle. Due to the excessive rains and severe cold, the guards of the defensive wall had felt it appropriate to take shelter in their posts. The wall was thus left unguarded.

The gap which the shepherd had alluded to was truly there, but it was no easy task to reach it since it was very high. However, one gallant soldier took support from a fig tree and successfully reached this opening. *Mughīth* removed his turban and threw the one end of it up to this soldier. By virtue of this, the turban served the purpose of a rope-ladder. One after the

other, the soldiers made their way to this opening. They then leaped through and attacked the soldiers nearby, successfully overpowering them. They then lay open the doors of the city. This city thus came under Muslim control without much of a struggle.



Right before our eyes was that very edge of the Guadalquivir which, 1,300 years ago, was the venue of this revolutionary battle. After crossing the road, we reached the edge of the river and this now dilapidated bridge was going towards the south.

Today, it looks pretty ordinary and gives the impression of being run-down due to years of neglect. But at one stage in history, it was considered the world's most phenomenal and monumental bridge. Because there was no such solid and expansive bridge anywhere in the world, it was counted among the unique wonders of the world. Before Muslim rule, it was a pretty ordinary and fragile structured bridge. When 'Umar ibn 'Abdīl 'Azīz took over the mantle of Caliphate, whilst seated in Damascus, he calculated the needs of the city of Cordoba. He

thus instructed the governor of Muslim Spain to construct a firm and large bridge on this river.

In 101 A.H., under the supervision of the expert 'Abd Ar-Rahmān ibn 'Ubaydillah Al-Ghāfiqī ۞, this bridge was built. Its length spanned more than 800 feet whilst its width was more than 40 yards. It was 60 feet above water level. Under it, 18 beautiful doors were built and above it 19 towers were built. There was absolutely no equivalent to this bridge anywhere in the world. One historian wrote at the time,

إن قنطرة قرطبة إحدى أعاجيب الدنيا

"The Cordoba Bridge is one of the most unique wonders of the world."



Repeated renovations and amendments have been made on this bridge, but the groundwork was laid by those Muslims in the glorious past. The passing of time has spoilt the form and appearance of this bridge. It now seems that for years no one has paid any form of attention to this bridge. But its lasting impressions tell a story of its inception.

From both sides of the bridge, we could see the river flowing, but due to the severe cold the current was rather slow. In several spots, the shrubs were affecting the free flow of the water. At the edge of river, there were several ruined and run-down buildings. We found out that these were actually mills. Building mills was considered a special art of the Spanish Muslims.

We continued walking down the bridge to its southern edge. We again noticed a door to an ancient fortress. This was a very old fortress built in the era of the Romans. It was known as 'Caliguris'. In the Muslim era it was known as 'Kalhara'. It is now known as 'Calahorra'. Only a small portion of this fortress now remains, on which stands a government office. The rest of the fortress now forms part of the road.

IN MADĪNAH AZ-ZAHRĀ' (THE SUNSHINE CITY)

Whilst standing on the Guadal-Quinur Bridge, we stopped a taxi. We boarded the taxi with instructions to take us to Medina Azahara [*Madīnah Az-Zahrā'*] (the sunshine city). Initially, the driver could not understand us. In our few lines of English, he would respond in a couple of sentences in Spanish, which we could not understand. Finally, I removed a tourism booklet on Cordoba which had a picture of *Madīnah az-Zahrā'*. As soon as his eyes fell on the picture, he immediately understood us. He began describing the place in Spanish with a couple of words in English 'here and there' thinking that we understood all he said. We put a stop to his positive assumption with a response in a few sentences of English. He now understood that we could not understand him and thus remained silent for the entire duration of the journey.

Madīnah az-Zahrā' is approximately eight miles away from the town of Cordoba. The vehicle continued making its way past the various streets and localities. Cordoba is now a modern city with its old buildings no longer in existence. They have effectively reconstructed this city. This is why, apart from *Jāmi'ah* Cordoba and a handful of other remnants from Muslim times, there is not much from the Muslim era. Albeit, there are many names of the streets and localities, which with slight reflection, will lead you to make out their Arabic origins.

After a few minutes, we were out of the town and driving alongside open, green, and lush fields on both sides. On this road, we saw a signboard written, Medina Azahara which indicated to the right. The driver turned right after which on our left, we noticed an old-fashioned wall. This was the defensive wall of *Madīnah az-Zahrā'*.

After driving for another kilometre, the vast countryside came to an end. We then turned left and began climbing a green and lush mountain. Upon reaching halfway up the mountain, the driver brought the car to a halt. He then informed us that the entrance to *Madīnah az-Zahrā'* was here. We disembarked from the taxi. On the eastern end there was a mountain, whilst on the western end there was an expansive valley from where we could see the ruins of *Madīnah az-Zahrā'*.

Madīnah az-Zahrā' was a relatively small royal city which was built as residential quarters for the Caliphs of Cordoba and their affiliates. This city was built in 325 AH by Caliph 'Abd Ar-Rahmān An-Nāṣir.

It is related that the Caliph's reason for building this city was that, since a certain slave girl had died leaving behind a large estate, he deemed it appropriate that this estate be sold and the amount received be used to free the Muslim captives in the hands of the Christians.

Upon investigating, it was ascertained that there were only a few Muslims in the hands of the Christians and after freeing them, there was still a huge chunk of this estate remaining. At that point, the Caliph's wife, *Zahrā'* requested her husband to build a splendid city in her name. The Caliph acceded to her request and the construction of *Madīnah Az-Zahrā'* thus began.

The major portion of the construction was completed over a period of 25 years during the reign of Caliph Nāṣir. But many more buildings were built in the tenure of the next Caliph. At the time, its length from 'east to west' spanned 2,700 yards, whilst its width from 'north to south' was 1,700 yards.

Madīnah az-Zahrā' comprised of royal palaces, courts, assembly halls, a *Jāmi'ah* Masjid and residential quarters for other royal family members. At the time, this was considered the most beautiful city in the world.

The mountain we were standing on was probably the very same 'Jabal Al-'Arūs' regarding which we had read, that when this city was built, and the queen *Zahrā'* accompanied Caliph *Nāṣir* to view the city, she was extremely impressed. However, on one end of the spectacular buildings, she noticed an unimpressive looking mountain which was a blot to the spectacular scenery. She vented her dismay to the Caliph, 'Will this elegant and beautiful slave remain in the 'lap' of this African'? He thus had all the unsuitable trees uprooted and planted countless fruit bearing trees, resulting in this mountain looking as gorgeous as a 'bride'. It is for this reason that it was given the name, 'Jabal Al-'Arūs' (the bride's mountain).

The palace in *Madīnah az-Zahrā'* was unparalleled in terms of its beauty, elegance, splendour and magnificence. Asian and European delegations would visit specially to view this palace.

In the palace, there was a chamber called the 'The Palace of the Caliphs'. The roof and walls of this chamber were made of gold and transparent marble. In the centre of the roof, an extremely unique and phenomenal looking gem would hang that was gifted to Caliph *Nāṣir* by the Turkish King, Leo.

In the centre of this chamber, there was a magnificent looking pond filled with mercury. In every corner of the chamber there were eight arched doors. These arches were supported by pillars made of marble and crystal glass.

The windows were made from tropical wood and elephant teeth, which were fashioned such that pearls were ingrained in them. When sunlight would fall in this chamber, the roof and walls would give off such resplendence and glow, simply leaving the onlooker dazzled in astonishment.

Whilst seated in this chamber, when Caliph *Nāṣir* intended on throwing awe into the hearts of those present, he

would indicate to a slave to shake the mercury in the pond. By doing so, the rays of the sun would flash throughout the room giving a lightning-like appearance. It would seem like the entire room was circulating. Some foreign envoys, unaware of the secret of this chamber would tremble in awe after witnessing this spectacle.

Only Allah knows how many strange and unique architectural and creative wonders *Madīnah az-Zahrā'* comprised of. They had constructed an artificial river too. They had also built a game reserve for animals to live within their natural habitat. Today, there is a prevalence of game reserves, but the inception of these was here in *Madīnah az-Zahrā'*.

Apparently, when *Madīnah az-Zahrā'* was built, this was the height of Muslim Spain. Looking at this 'paradise', many worldly powers would shake in awe. But truth be told, these luxurious buildings signalled the beginning of their downfall. These comforts ultimately snatched away their strength which lay in their abstinence, simplicity and ruggedness.

At the time when this massive royal palace was being built, what steps did the upright and God-fearing 'Ulamā take to address this scourge before the Caliphs? In this regard, history has recorded several unique incidents. At the time, the lecturer of the royal Masjid was *Imām Qāḍī Mundhir ibn Sa'īd* , whose eloquent speeches were considered a treasure in Arabic grammar. When Caliph *Nāṣir* would come to perform *Ṣalāh* behind him, he would openly admonish the congregation about the harms of excessive engrossment in the world and wastage.

As pointed out before, the aforementioned chamber had roofs and walls made from gold and marble. On one occasion, Caliph *Nāṣir* was seated in this chamber and boasting before his attendants,

"Has any great king from all the previous kings in history ever constructed a phenomenal chamber like this?"

The king's gatherings always had courtiers present. They very enthusiastically supported his claim and exceeded the bounds in praise. At that point, Qāḍī Mundhir ibn Sa'īd ؓ happened to enter. The Caliph too expressed his pride over the beauty of this chamber and its gold roofing before Qāḍī Mundhir. Qāḍī Mundhir ؓ remarked,

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فَصُومِعَاجٍ عَلَيْهِ يَضْهَرُونَ ۚ وَلِبُيُوتِهِمْ أَبْوَابٌ وَسُرُرٌ عَلَيْهَا يَتَكَبَّرُونَ ۚ
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Do you ever stop and reflect?"

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This magnificent city took 40 years to build, yet it was only able to display its pomp and splendour for 35 years. In the year 398 AH, when virtual war broke out in this land, this splendorous city was destroyed, becoming almost a 'heap of rubbish'.

In the year 435 AH, a minister of Muslim Spain, Abū'l Ḥazm happened to pass by this piece of land and upon observing the aftermath of Madīnah az-Zahrā', which was once the home of prominent kings and princes yet today, inhabited by wild animals and birds, was prompted to say,

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فَأَجَابَتْ هُنَا أَقَامُوا قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ سَارُوا وَلَسْتُ أَعْلَمُ أَيْنَا؟

The reply came, 'They resided only for a short while. They then left and to where? Even that, I do not know!'

We were standing right in the centre of 'Jabal Al-'Arūs'. Before us, there was an information office on the history of this land. Behind the office, we could see the ruins of Madīnah Az-Zahrā' from a slope in the valley. Until 1910 there were no signs of Madīnah Az-Zahrā'.



After 1910, archaeologists discovered certain ancient signs of the ruins from the foot of the mountains, so they began digging. It is in this manner that various historical remnants of this city were unravelled, and they have continued their excavations.

In this period of 80 years, a considerable portion of this city was unravelled. We continued observing the various

historical portions of this ruined city with great grief and admonition. It is difficult to even tell what the original was from these.

In all these years of digging, only one portion of this chamber was largely found in its original state. This portion was called 'Majlis Al-Mūnis'. The government of Spain has begun rebuilding this chamber back to its original state. The broken bricks of the arches, roofs and floors were found scattered in these ruins. They are now moulding the stones together and fitting them into their original state. This is a mammoth and tiring process. The result of this toil is that the hall of the 'Majlisu'l Mūnis' chamber is slowly regaining its original state.

Outside this hall, there lies a balcony from which one is able to view the vast and widespread ruins. Behind it is greenery, as far as the eye can see. Looking at the fantastic climate and natural scenery that prevail here, one now understands what a typically appropriate choice was made to position this city here.

Upon reaching this area, I recall a certain statement of a linguist of Muslim Spain. The ruler of the time had ordered him to leave Muslim Spain. In reply, he wrote a letter to the ruler asking him to reconsider his decision. After reading the letter, the ruler revoked his decision. He began his letter with the following words,

يا سيدي! كيف أفارق الأندلس؟ وهي جنة الدنيا،

أفق صقيل، وبساط مدبج، وهواء سائح، وماء متدفق، وطائر مترنم

"O my master! How can I possibly leave Muslim Spain? This is the paradise of the world. This shiny horizon, these adorned floors, the swaying winds, the gushing waters, these singing birds....."

From what I had witnessed with my very own eyes, this entire description was indeed accurate.

The excavation of the 'Sunshine City' continues to this day. The experts are very cautiously working their way through. But how much has been covered is already significant indeed? To view the progress made requires time. We briefly took a lesson filled walk. But it was nearly *Maghrib* time, so we hastily made our way back to the hotel.

After performing the '*Ishā Ṣalāh*' and partaking of supper we left the hotel for a stroll. The weather was extremely pleasant. This stroll was even more enjoyable considering the wide roads and beautiful buildings. As opposed to Granada, we did not notice any memorable monument or building of Muslim Spain within the heart of this city. It seems like the entire city was re-planned and rebuilt. All the amenities and comforts of other European countries were present in it.

This was a Saturday night. It seemed like there was a function in some part of the city. Looking at the hustle and bustle on the roads, the feeling was that all the residents of the city had come out on the roads. The thought crossed the mind that how many of these would probably possess Arab ancestry and whose forefathers were Muslims.

After the takeover of Christians, large numbers of people were forcefully converted to Christianity with the result that thousands of Muslims merged into Christian localities. This is why there will definitely be many who possess Arab ancestry. Today, there is not really anything Islamic left in their day to day lives, albeit in some of their traits and habits, there is a tinge of the old times. Hundreds of years have since passed from the Muslim era. The various revolutions and cycles of history have drastically changed the outlook of this place, but this handful of qualities and traits is a light reminder of their past, still protected.

Firstly, the physical features of the Spanish are pretty different from other Europeans. They have a tinge of a wheatish-colour to their white appearance, whilst in their graceful facial features they remind one of the Arabs. They are more cheerful, humble, and humorous than other Europeans. When meeting, they express the same affection and passion as one would find among the Arabs. In fact, the first word that comes on to their tongues when greeting is 'Ola' which is probably a spoilt and altered version of '*Ahlan*' (Welcome).

Similarly, when meeting, the Spanish embrace and kiss, a feature coming down centuries from the Arabs. They are also particular about washing their hands before and after eating, something I have not seen in any other European country. It is for this reason that in most of their restaurants, one will find special arrangements to cater for washing hands before eating. This is also probably a slight reminder of the culture of a people who once adorned this land with their blessings.

In the Spanish language too, there are still many signs and effects of the Arabic language. Many Spanish words have Arabic origins which have been slightly altered and incorporated into Spanish. For instance, in Arabic a bridge is called '*Qanṭarah*' whilst in Spanish it is '*Alcantara*'. In Arabic, sugar is '*Sukkar*' whilst in Spanish it is '*Azucar*'. In Arabic, rice is '*Uruz*' whilst in Spanish it is '*Arroz*'. In Arabic, a village is called '*Al-Qaryah*' whilst in Spanish it is '*Alqueria*'. In Arabic, a leader is '*Qā'id*' whilst in Spanish it is '*Alcaide*'. In Arabic, they use '*Amīn*' whilst in Spanish they use '*Alamin*'. In short, many words from Spanish clearly have their origins in the Arabic language. Every such word in Spanish that begins with 'Al' has its origins in the Arabic language.

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IN MALAGA

The next morning, we awoke to a thick cloud cover with slight drizzles. We were scheduled to board our flight at 2.00pm from Malaga to Paris. It was therefore necessary for us to reach the airport by 1pm. From here, Malaga was a distance of 200 kilometres. There was the possibility of us reaching late due to the rain. For this reason, we left immediately after partaking of breakfast.

It was a Sunday. People were enjoying the holiday in the comfort of their homes. The roads were thus free from congestion. Upon leaving Cordoba, the rain stopped. We thus breezed through the journey on this smooth highway. We noticed many villages along the way, but these were all pretty silent.

Fifteen or twenty miles before entering Malaga, a beautiful mountainous region began. This was the famous mountainous strip of Muslim Spain, 'Alpuxarras' which on the southern end of Granada runs concurrently with the Mediterranean Ocean till 'Al-Mariyya'. This was once considered a beautiful region of Muslim Spain. This is the same city where *Abū 'Abdillāh Gharnāṭa* lived for a considerable period after losing control of Granada. When he was later forced into exile, the Muslims of this area maintained their guerrilla warfare against the Christians. This opposition continued until the 9th Islamic century.

This area possesses absolutely amazing scenery. We were so overwhelmed by the scenery that after ascending a certain mountain, we simply could not control ourselves. We stopped and disembarked from our vehicle simply to enjoy the breath taking and hearty scenery.



We reached Malaga city at approximately 11am. Malaga is one of the oldest cities of Muslim Spain, mention of which is made even before the advent of *Sayyidunā 'Īsa* ﷺ. In the era of the Muslims, this was the central city of an entire province. Even today, this city is still the capital of the Malaga province.

In the Muslim era, this city was an important and strategic seaport and business hub. Its figs and grapes were renowned throughout Muslim Spain. The art of making gold coloured utensils from sand was considered a distinct profession of these people. This is still presently the case. Muslims ruled over this city for 800 years. Great '*Ulamā* (scholars) emanated from this city who were famously known as '*Maliqi*'.

When all the major cities and provinces of Muslim Spain came under Christian control, with the exception of Granada, Malaga too remained under the rule and jurisdiction of Granada. But in this last phase too, when *Abu'l Ḥasan* ascended the throne (took power) of Granada, he reduced his powers and handed over power of Malaga to his brother, *Zaghl*. He also declared Malaga to be independent. *Abu'l Ḥasan* and *Zaghl*

joined hands and fought the Christians 'tooth and nail' dealing them severe blows. This then lent courage and confidence to the Muslims.

A revival effort was on the brink of materialising in the Muslims fight against the Christians to free Muslim Spain. But tragically, *Abū 'Abdillāh* plotted against his own father, *Abu'l Ḥasan*, and instigated to dethrone him from power. He then established his own government over Granada.

When this happened, *Abu'l Ḥasan* escaped to his brother, *Zaghl*. This incident led to rifts and hostilities between Granada and Malaga. Through these rifts, the Christians were strengthened.

Abu'l Ḥasan and *Zaghl* continued engaging in combat with the Christians from 888 AH to 891 AH, until they were both martyred in battle in the year 891 AH. After their passing, there was no spirit left within the Muslims. The result of this was that the king of Castile, Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, took control of this city.

After capturing Malaga, the government of *Abū 'Abdillāh* did not last more than seven years. In the year 898 AH, *Abū 'Abdillāh* handed over Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella.

In the Muslim era, Malaga was certainly an important city, but not as prominent and large as Granada and Cordoba. But today, the opposite is true. In terms of size, population and technological advancement, Malaga is well ahead of both, Granada and Cordoba. Because of its port and domestic airport, its importance has surpassed both Cordoba and Granada. The coast of Malaga is considered very beautiful. The weather here is also not as cold as the rest of Europe. This is why this city is indeed a tourism hub.

Now in Malaga, even if one searches for any remnants or reminders of Muslim Spain, one is unable to find much. It is said

that there is a vegetable market from Muslim Spain that is still being used to serve the same purpose. The *Jāmi'ah* Masjid of Malaga, which was forcefully converted to a church after the Christians took over, is an old building of the city. Apart from this, on the northern end of the city by the coast, there is a fortress from Muslim Spain that is still preserved. It is called 'Gibral Fara'. Reaching all these places requires time and with it a guide. We did not have either of these at our disposal. We therefore could not travel to these places.

ANTAQĪRA (ANTEQUERA)

Before reaching the airport to board our flight, we still had some time at our disposal. Apart from a general view of this city, with the aid of a map we were able to choose a coastal area which was situated few miles from the western end of the airport. On the map it was written as 'Antequera'. This is in fact 'Antaqīra', an old city of the province of Malaga. The name has been spoilt and altered. It is situated on the northern end of the coast on a high platform.

It is said that there still are several remnants of the defensive wall from the old city. Situated close by, on a mountain top, is a sublime fortress which has been preserved from the Muslim era. On the eastern end of the city, there is a hill under which there is a basement 65 feet below the surface. In bygone eras, this was considered an underground graveyard (people were tortured and left to die here).



The mountain closest to the city contains a marble mine. Amongst the former dwellers of this city was the famous poet, Abū Bakr Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad Anṣārī Ḥakīm Antaqīrī. This city remained under Muslim rule till 813 AH. Later, when Christians took over, Muslims escaped this city and took refuge in Granada. It is for this reason that you will find a locality close to 'Qaṣr Al-Ḥamrā', known as Antequera.

But today, Antequera is a holiday destination that consists of sky-scraping hotels and apartments for rent. People visit this place on weekends to derive enjoyment on the coast. Because it was winter, it was less busy. But I have heard that in the summer, this area is packed with tourists.

We stopped our vehicle for a while on the coastal road of Antequera, Drive Marine. This entire coastline was enveloped by silence and before us the waves of the Mediterranean ocean were 'tossing and twisting' from side to side. Cutting through these waters, Muslims at one stage in history reached the coast of Muslim Spain. These very waters once witnessed the spectacle of the warriors of Islam disembarking on its shores.

These very waters once witnessed the spectacle of the warriors of Islam disembarking on its shores regarding whom 'Allāmah Iqbāl said:

تھایہاں ہنگامہ ان صحرائشیوں کا کبھی

*This was the place of assemblage for the desert dwellers
once upon a time,*

بحربازی گاہ تھا جن کے سفینوں کا کبھی

The ocean was the playground of [their] ships occasionally.

زلزلے جن سے شہنشاہوں کے درباروں میں تھے

They would cause tremors in the courts of emperors,

بجلیوں کے آشیانے جن کی تلواروں میں تھے

They were those in whose swords were stored thunderbolts.

This is that very same ocean which, after 800 years, witnessed the progenies of those great warriors of Islam boarding ship in their pitiable state and making their escape to Morocco. Whosoever managed to escape with his clan was regarded to be fortunate and looked upon with envy. This very ocean witnessed the famous captain, Khayr ud-Dīn, serve selflessly for years by ferrying Muslims from Ex-Muslim Spain to Morocco and Algeria, thereby freeing them from the clutches of Christian oppression. Today, this is that very same ocean, the shores of which are a hub of tourist activity.

My friend and companion, Sa'īd was so affected by the 'past and present' of Spain that he spontaneously remarked, "Will this land ever be illuminated with the light of Iman again?"

I replied, "If Muslims are particular with protecting their present-day lands, then that is indeed commendable and sufficient to avert a repeat of Muslim Spain."

The causes for the rise of Muslims in Muslim Spain are clear and the causes for its ultimate downfall too are clear.

﴿وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ النَّاسِ﴾

"These are the days that We cause to alternate between people (when each party has days of victory and days of defeat)..."

[Sūrah Āl- 'Imrān: 140]

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لا غالب إلا الله

Many Spanish words have Arabic origins which have been slightly altered and incorporated into Spanish. For instance, in Arabic a bridge is called 'Qanṭarah' whilst in Spanish it is 'Alcantara'. In Arabic, sugar is 'Sukkar' whilst in Spanish it is 'Azucar'. In Arabic, rice is 'Uruz' whilst in Spanish it is 'Arroz'. In Arabic, a village is called 'Al-Qaryah' whilst in Spanish it is 'Alqueria'. In Arabic, a leader is 'Qā'id' whilst in Spanish it is 'Alcaide'. In Arabic, they use 'Amīn' whilst in Spanish they use 'Alamin'. In short, many words from Spanish clearly have their origins in the Arabic language. Every such word in Spanish that begins with 'Al' has its origins in the Arabic language.

الأندلس

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